

Claims:

1. A method for separating letters in which irregularly spaced and disordered piles of letters that are being transported on a conveyor belt (1) are rendered into a continuous stream of letters that are largely not lying on top of each other and that are distributed virtually homogeneously over the conveyor belt (1), characterized in that
at least one retention plate (15) affixed at an axis of rotation (12) in a radial orientation with respect thereto rotates around the axis of rotation (12) that is arranged crosswise to the conveying direction of the conveyor belt (1), horizontally and above the conveyor belt (1) in such a way that the retention plate (15) situated below the axis of rotation (12) has a speed component in a direction that is opposite to the conveying direction of the conveyor belt (1).
2. The method according to Claim 1, characterized in that
several retention plates (15, 15') rotate around the axis of rotation (12).
3. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims, characterized in that
the distance between the axis of rotation (12) and the conveyor belt (1) is varied.
4. A device for separating letters that renders irregularly spaced and disordered piles of letters that are being transported on a conveyor belt (1) into a

continuous stream of letters that are largely not lying on top of each other and that are distributed virtually homogeneously over the conveyor belt (1),

characterized in that

it has an axis of rotation (12) that is arranged crosswise to the conveying direction of a conveyor belt (1), horizontally and above the conveyor belt (1), and one or
5 more retention plates (15, 15') that are affixed at the axis of rotation (12) in a radial orientation with respect thereto and that rotate around said axis of rotation (12), whereby the rotating retention plates (15, 15') can be driven in such a way that, in at least one operating state of the device, they have a speed component that is opposite
10 to the conveying direction of the conveyor belt (1) whenever they are below the axis of rotation (12).

5. The device according to Claim 4,

characterized in that

15 the angular distances between the retention plates (15, 15') are the same.

6. The device according to one or both of Claims 4 and 5,

characterized in that

one or more of the retention plates (15') has a smaller extension in the radial
20 direction relative to the axis of rotation (12) than at least one other retention plate (15).

7. The device according to one or more of Claims 4 to 6,

characterized in that

an end piece (16) of at least one of the retention plates (15) is configured elastically in alignment with the radius relative to the rotational movement of the retention plates (15, 15').